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## Book Notices.

*"Wisdom, Wit, and Whims of Distinguished Ancient Philosophers."* By Joseph Banvard, A.M. SHELDON, LAMPONT, & BLAKEMAN. 1855.

THIS book is a compilation from various works, without any peculiar talent on the part of the author, or evidence of any faculty, except that of an extensive reader. Still, as such, it may be valuable, and certainly is as a book of reference for the views of the men of the past. The name of the book is a misnomer, or worse, since we can scarcely dignify by the name of philosophers, men who are whimsical, nor can wit be considered a portion of philosophy. The style is neither brilliant nor attractive, but simply matter-of-fact, as the following extract will show:—

## HYPATIA.

"Hypatia was the daughter of Theon, a celebrated mathematician of Alexandria. Her extensive learning, elegant manners, and tragical end, have rendered her name immortal. She possessed an acute and penetrating judgment, and great sublimity and fertility of genius, and her talents were cultivated with assiduity by her father and other preceptors. After she had made herself mistress of polite learning, and of the sciences of geometry and astronomy, as far as they were then understood, she entered upon the study of philosophy. She prosecuted this study with such uncommon success, that she was importuned to become a public preceptor in the school where Plotinus and his successors had taught; and her love of science enabled her so far to subdue the natural diffidence of the sex, that she yielded to the public voice, and exchanged her female decorations for the philosopher's cloak. In the schools, and in other places of public resort, she discoursed upon philosophical topics, explaining, and endeavoring to reconcile, the systems of Plato, Aristotle, and other masters. A ready elocution, and graceful address, united with rich erudition and sound judgment, procured her numerous followers and admirers; among whom was Synesius. But that which reflects the highest honor upon her memory is, that, though she excelled most of the philosophers of her age in mathematical and philosophical science, she discovered no pride of learning; and though she was in person exceedingly beautiful, she never yielded to the impulse of female vanity, or gave occasion to the slightest suspicion against her chastity.

"The extraordinary combination of accomplishments and virtues which adorned the character of Hypatia, rendered her house the general resort of persons of learning and distinction. But it was impossible that so much merit should not excite envy. The qualifications and attainments to which she was indebted for her celebrity, proved in the issue, the occasion of her destruction. It happened that at this time the patriarchal chair of Alexandria was occupied by Cyril, a bishop of great authority, but of great haughtiness and violence of temper. In the vehemence of his bigoted zeal, he had treated the Jews with severity, and at last banished them out of Alexandria. Orestes, the prefect of the city, a man of a liberal spirit, highly resented this expulsion as an unpardonable stretch of ecclesiastical power, and a cruel act of oppression and injustice against a people who had inhabited Alexandria from the time of its founder. He reported the affair to the emperor. The bishop, on his part, complained to the prince of the seditious temper of the Jews, and attempted to justify his proceedings. The emperor declined to interpose his authority; and the affair rapidly advanced to the utmost extremity. A body of about five hundred monks, who espoused the cause of Cyril, came into the city with a determination to support him by force. Meeting the prefect, as he was passing through the street in his carriage, they stopped him, and loaded him with reproaches; and one of them threw a stone at his head, and wounded him. The populace, who were by this time assembled on the part of the prefect, routed the monks, and seized one of their leaders. Orestes ordered him to be put to death. Cyril buried his body in the church, and gave instructions that his name should be registered among the sacred martyrs. Hypatia, who had always been highly respected by the prefect, and who had, at this time, frequent conferences with him, was supposed by the partisans of the bishop to have been deeply engaged in the interest of Orestes. Their resentment at length rose to such a height, that they formed a design against her life. As she was one day returning home from the schools, the mob seized her, forced her from her chair, and carried her to the Cassarean church; where stripping off her garments, they put her to death with extreme barbarity; and having torn her body limb from limb, committed it to the flames. Cyril himself has, by some writers, been suspected of secretly promoting this horrid act of violence. And if the haughtiness and severity of his temper, his persecution of the Jews, his oppressive and iniquitous treatment of the Novatian sect of Christians and their bishop, the

vehement of his present indignation against Orestes and his party, and, above all, the protection which he is said to have afforded to the immediate perpetrators of the murder of Hypatia, be duly considered, it will perhaps appear that this suspicion is not wholly without foundation. Hypatia was murdered under the reign of the Emperor Theodosius II. in the year four hundred and fifteen. Hence it is certain that she could not have been, as Suidas, with his usual precipitation, relates, the wife of Isidorus; it is probable that through her whole life she remained in a state of celibacy.

*The Life of Horace Greeley*, Editor of the New York Tribune. By J. Parton. MASON BROTHERS, 1855.

THE conscientious biography of any representative man is worth more to the world than those of a thousand mere men of place. And whatever opinion may be held as to Horace Greeley, his probity, personal or political, or as to his views, no one can deny that he is an illustration of one of the strongest points of the American character.

It is not the place here to discuss his personal character further than the book necessitates it, and this is too far. We would have better liked that the biographer should have thought less of him as an individual, and more as an expression of those qualities which are manifested so strongly in him. The world of literature is filled, to little effect, with the doings of this and that man, to the world before unknown and of no importance, and will be of as little moment in all time to come, sayings and deeds magnified by partial friends into an importance which the verdict of the world will not justify.

Horace Greeley will not, we believe, be so forgotten. He has made his mark too deeply on the times, to say nothing of the future, to be so easily laid aside. The man who by his individual force of mind has established one of the most influential journals in existence, if not the most influential, who has exerted an influence unparalleled among the journalists of America, upon the politics of his time, will not be forgotten with the crowd of men who have struggled and jostled for eminence and influence, without regard to the general good.

Few as are the men who have stood out from their classes far enough to be entitled to the names of representative men—fewer still have been fortunate enough to find a loving and yet just biographer, and this Mr. Parton seems to have been, so far as it is possible for a man to be at once loving and just. That the book was a labor of love is manifest everywhere, and if the author had not been so conscientious as to facts, we might be inclined to give less credence to the book. It is not in the nature of men to be perfectly impartial in estimating each other; some thread of black or gold will lead us all one way or the other, and fortunate are we if those which influence us are of the golden kind. The preface makes the declaration of the intentions of the writer clearly.

I undertook the task simply and solely because I liked the man, because I gloried in his career, because I thought the story of his life ought to be told.

The writings of an editor usually pass away with the occasions that called them forth. They may have aroused, amused, instructed and advanced a nation—many nations. They may have saved or overthrown systems and dynasties; provoked or prevented wars, revolutions and disasters; thrown around Prejudice and Bigotry the decent mantle of Respectability, or torn it off; made great truths familiar and fruitful in the public mind, or given a semblance of dignity to the vulgar hue and cry which assails such truths always when they are new. These things, and others equally important, an editor may do, editors have done. But he rarely has leisure to produce a work which shall perpetuate his name and personal influence. A collection of his editorial writings will not do it, for he is compelled to write hastily, diffusely, and on the topics of the hour. The story of his life *may*. It is the simple narratives in Franklin's autobiography that have perpetuated, not the name of that eminent man, the thunder and lightning have his name in charge, but the influence of his personality in forming the characters of his countrymen.

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This book is as true as I could make it; nothing has been inserted or suppressed for the sake of making out

a case. Errors of detail in a work containing so many details as this can scarcely be avoided; but upon the correctness of very important statement, and upon the general fidelity of the picture presented, the reader may rely.

There are some new points of Greeley's mental being given to us in the book. Few who have observed his course in the political world would dream that there was anything poetical in him, and all will read with interest the following specimens of his lyric power—not of the immortal kind, but still genuine and hearty:

## FANTASIES.

They deem me cold, the thoughtless and light-hearted,  
In that I worship not at beauty's shrine;  
They deem me cold, that through the years departed,  
I ne'er have bowed me to some form divine;  
They deem me proud, that, where the world hath  
flattered,  
I ne'er have knelt to languish or adore;  
They think not that the homage idly scattered  
Leaves the heart bankrupt, ere its spring is o'er.

No! in my soul there glows but one bright vision,  
And o'er my heart there rules but one fond spell,  
Bright'ning my hours of sleep with dreams Elysian  
Of one unseen, yet loved, ay cherished well;  
Unseen? Ah, no; her presence round me lingers,  
Chasing each wayward thought that tempts to rove;  
Weaving Affection's web with fairy fingers,  
And waking thoughts of purity and love.

Star of my heaven! thy beams shall guide me ever,  
Though clouds obscure, and thorns bestrew my path;  
As sweeps my bark adown life's arrowy river  
Thy angel smile shall soothe the misfortune's wrath;  
And ah! should Fate ere speed her deadliest arrow,  
Should vice allure to plunge in her dark sea,  
Be this the only shield my soul shall borrow—  
One glance to Heaven—one burning thought of thee!

I ne'er on earth may gaze on those bright features,  
Nor drink the light of that soul-beaming eye;  
But wander 'mid earth's unthinking creatures,  
Unloved in life, and unlamented die;  
But ne'er shall fade the spell thou weavest o'er me,  
Nor fail the star that lights my lonely way;  
Still shall the night's fond dreams that light restore me,  
Though Fate forbids its gentler beams by day.

I have not dreamed that gold or gems adorn thee—  
That Flatt'r's voice may vaunt thy matchless form;  
I little reck that worldlings all may scorn thee,  
Be but thy soul still pure, thy feelings warm;  
Be thine bright Intellect's unfading treasures,  
And Poesy's more deeply-hallowed spell,  
And Faith the zest which heightens all thy pleasures,  
With trusting love—Maid of my soul! farewell!

On the whole, there is a great deal of matter here which will have importance of any kind only in the eyes of his friends and admirers—to all else they will be chaff; but there is grain—and some hard kernels to crack, too—in the book; and its influence, we hope, will be a good one on the age—which is a hope we dare entertain with regard to few books of any time.

In a latter chapter, the author gives a list of pictures on the walls of Greeley's parlors—they are all copies of the old masters! poor ones mostly, we can testify from personal observation. It seems strange that a man so fixed in the belief of the importance of encouraging home industry, should cover his parlor walls with a collection of such rubbish as they are. We hinted the same to him one evening, and, to defend himself, he replied, that he had bought them only as souvenirs of the places he had visited, candidly confessing that he knew nothing about Art—and thence concluding, *we conclude*, that there was no necessity for his learning anything about it. He would have done better to have gathered roadside flowers as souvenirs of his travels—if he had time to stop and pick them—and then commissioned some honest artist to paint him a conscientious picture of the old homestead, if it were the only painting or work of Art he possessed, than to fill his eyes for ever with these apologies for Art, and delude himself into the idea that he was looking at something beautiful. A man may, in course of time, persuade himself that even the mortified saints of Spagnoletto were things worthy of artistic regard, and so degrade his perception of the beautiful to suit his ideas.